United Nations E/AC.51/2015/9

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
25 March 2015

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-fifth session
Substantive session, 1-26 June 2015
Item 3 (b) of the provisional agenda*
Programme questions: evaluation

Evaluation of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 64/289, established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), to be operational by 1 January 2011. Its mandate includes normative, operational and coordination work in support of the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women.

OIOS examined the relevance and effectiveness of UN-Women in achieving its mandate through normative support work and its link with operational activities. It used a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, including content analysis, interviews, surveys, field missions, meta-analysis of secondary data, and direct observation.

Despite resource levels being below what was envisioned, UN-Women has increased the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women has increased the opportunities for related issues to be integrated into member State deliberations and related normative outcomes, as well as in the work of the United Nations system. At the regional and country levels, the Entity's normative support work has contributed to elevating those issues in United Nations country programming and activities and strengthened dialogue with government and development partners.

* E/AC.51/2015/1.

15-04632 (E) 170415

Please recycle

UN-Women has also achieved positive results in strengthening the normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women. It has supported the adoption of gender-specific norms and standards and promoted the integration of the subject into global and sectoral agendas. It was particularly effective in working to achieve the agreed conclusions of the fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women and the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the proposed post-2015 agenda. UN-Women also strengthened its engagement with the Security Council and supported the expansion of the normative framework with regard to the role that women play in all stages of conflict prevention and resolution and recovery. UN-Women has contributed to stronger national legislation and policies, in particular on ending violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting, and women's leadership in politics and decision-making.

The Entity's support to the implementation of gender-specific norms at the global, regional and national levels has been challenged by several factors. In addition to insufficient resources and factors beyond the Entity's direct control, such as a lack of political will and government capacity and cultural resistance to gender equality and the empowerment of women, these include the broad nature of the six impact areas of the UN-Women strategic plan and insufficient linkages between UN-Women headquarters and field offices, including between its normative and operational work.

In order to effectively support the implementation of the normative framework, UN-Women has needed to coordinate with its United Nations partners, and it has had some success in this regard, in particular in countries where it has a presence. However, UN-Women has not fully capitalized on its United Nations partnerships to fully leverage the comparative advantages of other entities with a greater field presence and wider networks, and its roles and responsibilities regarding coordination in supporting the implementation of the normative framework have not been fully defined.

OIOS makes the following four important recommendations to UN-Women:

(a) In the context of the midterm review of its strategic plan in 2016, define how it will address key issues within its six impact areas;

(b) Further enhance the synergies between its two subprogrammes by making linkages between them more systematic, regular and, where appropriate, formal;

(c) Further strengthen the existing linkages between headquarters and field offices, including enhanced support to field offices in the implementation of the framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women;

(d) In consultation with its United Nations partners, further clarify complementarities with regard to implementing the normative framework.

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	4
II.	Background	4
III.	Methodology	7
IV.	Evaluation results	8
	A. Despite resource levels being lower than originally envisioned, UN-Women has enhanced the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women through its normative support work	8
	B. UN-Women has achieved positive results in strengthening the normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women	11
	C. UN-Women support to the implementation of gender equality norms and standards at the global, regional and country levels has been challenged by several factors	14
	D. UN-Women has not yet fully leveraged its United Nations partnerships in order to more effectively support the implementation of the normative framework	19
V.	Conclusion	23
VI.	Recommendations	24
Annex		
	Formal response of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to the evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services	26

I. Introduction

1. The Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) identified the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) for evaluation on the basis of a risk assessment undertaken by OIOS to identify Secretariat programme evaluation priorities. The Committee for Programme and Coordination selected the programme evaluation of UN-Women for consideration at its fifty-fifth session, in June 2015 (see A/68/16, para. 158). The General Assembly endorsed the selection in its resolution 68/20.

2. The general frame of reference for OIOS is set out in General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B, 54/244 and 59/272, as well as ST/SGB/273, which, in accordance with Article 97 of the Charter of the United Nations, authorizes OIOS to initiate, carry out and report on any action that it considers necessary to fulfil its responsibilities. OIOS evaluation is provided for in the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).[1]

3. Within this context, the objective of the evaluation was to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance and effectiveness of UN-Women in achieving its mandate in support of gender equality and the empowerment of women through normative support work and its link with operational activities. The topic of the evaluation emerged from a scoping phase described in detail in the evaluation inception report. Given the need for UN-Women to strengthen the linkages between intergovernmental decisions and the implementation of those decisions on the ground, its normative support work is critical to the achievement of its overall objectives and mandate. The evaluation has been conducted in conformity with the norms and standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group.

II. Background

History, mandate and normative framework

4. In its resolution 64/289, the General Assembly established UN-Women as a composite entity with normative, operational and coordination functions to be operational by 1 January 2011, by consolidating the mandates of the following entities:

(a) Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women;

(b) Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat;

(c) United Nations Development Fund for Women;

[1] Regulation 7.1: "The objective of evaluation is: (a) to determine as systematically and objectively as possible the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impact of the Organization's activities in relation to their objectives; (b) to enable the Secretariat and Member States to engage in systematic reflection, with a view to increasing the effectiveness of the main programmes of the Organization by altering their content and, if necessary, reviewing their objectives."

(d) International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

5. UN-Women was assigned to lead, coordinate and promote the accountability of the United Nations system on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The General Assembly decided that the Charter of the United Nations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (resolution S-23/2, annex, and resolution S-23/3, annex) and applicable United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions that support, address and contribute to gender equality and the empowerment of women would provide the general framework for the Entity's work programme.

6. UN-Women provides guidance and technical support to all member States, at their request, on gender equality, the empowerment and rights of women and gender mainstreaming. It is mandated to work in consultation with national machineries for women and civil society organizations and to operate as part of the resident coordinator system within the United Nations country team by leading and coordinating the team's work on gender equality and the empowerment of women under the leadership of the resident coordinator.

Structure and governance

7. UN-Women operates under an Executive Director at the Under-Secretary-General level. It comprises subprogramme 1, Intergovernmental support, coordination and strategic partnerships, and subprogramme 2, Policy and programme activities, each led by an Assistant Secretary-General. Its structure also includes the Management and Administration Division, the Human Resources Office and the Independent Evaluation Office.

8. In the past two years, UN-Women developed its regional architecture to identify efficiencies and strengthen field capacity. In 2014, UN-Women had its headquarters in New York; it also had 6 regional offices, 6 multi-country offices, 48 country offices and programme presence in 30 countries.

Global strategic priorities and results framework

9. As noted in its strategic plans for 2011-2013 and 2014-2017, its results focus on six impact areas:

(a) Women lead and participate in decision-making at all levels;

(b) Women, especially the poorest and most excluded, are economically empowered and benefit from development;

(c) Women and girls live free from violence;

(d) Peace and security and humanitarian action are shaped by women's leadership and participation;

(e) Governance and national planning reflect accountability for gender equality commitments and priorities;

(f) A comprehensive and dynamic set of global norms, policies, and standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women exists and is applied through action by Governments and other stakeholders at all levels.

10. The strategy for achieving these results is to bring together and strengthen coherence among the Entity's four main functions:

(a) Intergovernmental support;

(b) United Nations system coordination;

(c) Operational assistance to member States and civil society organizations;

(d) Advocacy and communication.

11. As UN-Women receives resources from the United Nations regular budget, it is mandated by the General Assembly to prepare a biennial strategic framework.[2]

Resources

12. The Entity's projected resources for the biennium 2014-2015 amount to $716 million, 98 per cent of which come from extrabudgetary contributions.[3] UN-Women also administers and mobilizes resources for the Fund for Gender Equality and the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women.

13. According to the proposed programme budget of UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015 (A/68/6 (Sect. 17)), UN-Women had 471 staff posts, of which 45 were funded through the regular budget and 426 through extrabudgetary contributions. As at October 2014, the UN-Women staff list included 757 positions, of which 38 per cent were funded from additional sources. Sixty-eight per cent of staff were based in the field.

Normative support work

14. OIOS used the United Nations Evaluation Group's definition of normative work approved by all of the Group's members, including UN-Women, in 2012: "the support to the development of norms and standards in conventions, declarations, regulatory frameworks, agreements, guidelines, codes of practice and other standard-setting instruments at the global, regional and national levels. Normative work also includes the support to the implementation of these instruments at the policy level, i.e. their integration into legislation, policies and development plans, and to their implementation at the programme level."[4] This definition is generally concurrent with the Entity's own description of normative support work.

15. Within the context of the definition above, the Entity's normative support work contributes to results at three levels:

(a) Development of norms and standards (in conventions, declarations, guidelines and other standard-setting instruments) at the global, regional and national levels;

(b) Implementation of norms and standards at the policy level;

(c) Implementation of norms and standards at the programme level.

---

[2] During the period of the evaluation, the Entity's work was guided by the strategic framework for the period 2014-2015 (A/67/6/Rev.1, programme 14).

[3] Estimated regular budget resources for the biennium 2014-2015 amounted to $15.7 million (A/68/6 (Sect. 17)).

[4] United Nations Evaluation Group Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the United Nations System.

III. Methodology

16. As previously noted, OIOS assessed the Entity's support to both the development and the implementation of norms and standards, including operational activities. It assessed the Entity's United Nations partnerships and coordination activities within the specific context of how those relate to its normative support work. It did not directly assess the Entity's partnerships with civil society organizations.

17. The evaluation used the following combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods:

(a) Document review: content analysis of documents, including intergovernmental resolutions; UN-Women strategic plans, country strategic notes, budgets, annual reports and coordination strategy; United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, resident coordinator reports and country reports on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action;

(b) Interviews: 161 semi-structured interviews with UN-Women headquarters and field staff and representatives of member States, civil society and United Nations partners;

(c) Field missions: visits to Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, India, Senegal and Thailand;

(d) Surveys: web-based surveys of:

(i) All UN-Women staff;[5]

(ii) UN-Women civil society advisory groups;[6]

(iii) Resident coordinators;[7]

(iv) UN-Women Executive Board;[8]

(v) Commission on the Status of Women;[9]

(e) Twitter analysis: structured analysis of information from UN-Women accounts;

(f) Meta-analysis: review of 15 UN-Women evaluation reports;

[5] The survey was conducted from September to November 2014 and sent to 689 headquarters and field staff. A total of 269 staff responded, a 39 per cent response rate.

[6] The survey was conducted from September to October 2014 and sent to all 281 members of civil society advisory groups. A total of 177 members responded, a 63 per cent response rate.

[7] The survey was sent to countries with and those without a UN-Women field presence. The former was conducted from September to October 2014 and sent to 54 resident coordinators, of whom 26 responded (a 48 per cent response rate). The latter was conducted from September to October 2014 and sent to 77 resident coordinators, of whom 24 responded (a 31 per cent response rate).

[8] The survey was conducted from August to October 2014 and sent to all 59 Executive Board members. A total of 10 responded, a 17 per cent response rate. Owing to the low response rate, data from that survey were not used.

[9] The survey was conducted from August to October 2014 and sent to 63 former and current delegates of the Commission on the Status of Women. A total of 11 responded, a 17 per cent response rate. Owing to the low response rate, data from that survey were not used.

(g) Direct observation of meetings of the UN-Women Executive Board, General Assembly committees and advocacy events organized by UN-Women.

18. An independent gender expert consultant reviewed the evaluation terms of reference, data collection instruments, preliminary results and draft report.

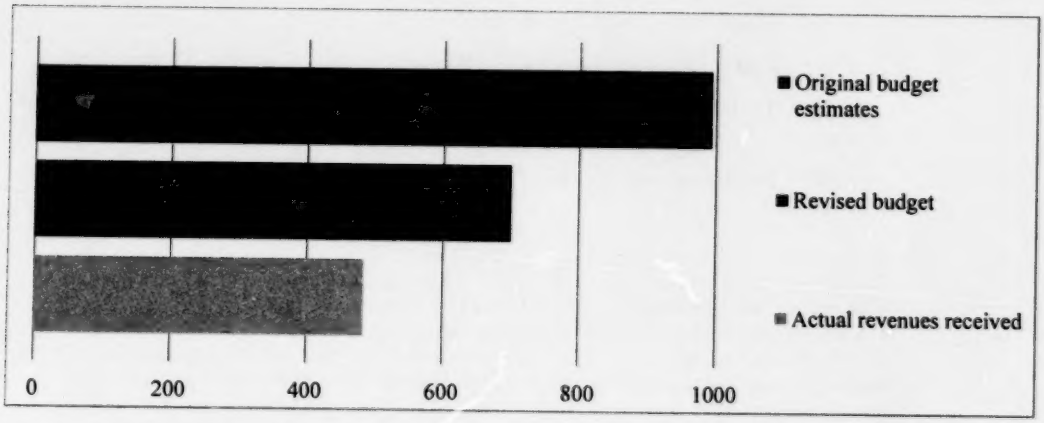
19. OIOS consulted UN-Women during the conduct of the evaluation and expresses thanks to it for its cooperation and assistance. Its response to the draft report is contained in the annex to the present report.

IV. Evaluation results

A. Despite resource levels being lower than originally envisioned, UN-Women has enhanced the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women through its normative support work

20. The level of voluntary contributions received by UN-Women — on which it heavily depends to deliver its mandate — has been significantly lower than originally estimated. Despite a 20 per cent increase from 2011 to 2013, the level of voluntary contributions in 2012-2013 was 51 per cent below the original estimate in 2011[10] and 31 per cent below the revised 2012 budget that the UN-Women Executive Board deemed necessary to deliver on the organization's mandate.[11]

Figure I
UN-Women voluntary contributions, 2012-2013, compared with original and revised budgets
(Millions of United States dollars)



Source: A/66/6 (Sect. 17), UNW/2013/7, list of voluntary contributions to UN-Women (2013), UN-Women integrated budget estimates for UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015.

[10] A/66/6 (Sect. 17).
[11] Integrated budget estimates for UN-Women for the biennium 2014-2015 (UNW/2013/7).

21. Although the lower-than-estimated level of resources has significantly affected the capacity of UN-Women to effectively implement its normative mandate (as discussed in result C), UN-Women has improved the visibility of gender equality and the empowerment of women and increased opportunities for their integration into member State deliberations and related normative outcomes and the work of the United Nations system. Nearly all member States, United Nations partners and UN-Women staff interviewed asserted that gender equality and the empowerment of women, as championed by UN-Women senior management and country programme representatives, were addressed more prominently than before. Staff and stakeholders volunteered that increasing visibility and awareness of gender equality and the empowerment of women was one of the three most important results that the Entity's normative support work had achieved since its creation. All agreed that, without UN-Women as the sole United Nations entity with its dedicated mandate, the discourse and legislative outcomes on those issues would not exist.

22. At the global level, UN-Women leadership created and supported opportunities to discuss and strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women in intergovernmental and other meetings. In addition to the technical support offered to member States during the negotiation of new norms, UN-Women co-sponsored high-level meetings and side events to raise awareness and promote the integration of concerns related to its mandate in various sectors. These included environment and climate change, humanitarian affairs, sustainable urbanization, indigenous peoples' rights, youth and health. For example, the collaboration between UN-Women and the Peacebuilding Support Office during the seventh session of the Organizational Committee of the Peacebuilding Commission, in 2013, resulted in the adoption of a declaration on women's economic empowerment for peacebuilding (PBC/7/OC/L.1). In 2012, UN-Women organized several events on strengthening women's access to justice and promoted the integration of gender perspectives into the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/749) in preparation for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the rule of law at the national and international levels, held in 2012.

23. At the regional and country levels, the Entity's normative support work strengthened the dialogue on its mandate with government and development partners. In Mali, for example, the Conference on Women's Leadership in the Sahel Region gathered 40 women ministers, activists and experts to promote women's role in crisis management.[12] In Colombia, the Entity's engagement prompted the mobilization of women's civil society organizations and a greater representation of women at peace talks. The "Gender equality in political governance" project in the Pacific enhanced public support for the issue, which resulted in increased demand for gender equality in government programmes.[13] In Senegal, UN-Women enhanced the visibility of the United Nations joint programme on gender equality and the empowerment of women and advocated with ministries the use of gender-responsive tools in public management.

24. The Entity's normative support work has further contributed to elevating the subject in United Nations country programming and activities. A majority of

[12] Organized by the European Union, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sahel and UN-Women.

[13] Evaluation of the "Gender equality in political governance" project by UN-Women and the Australian Agency for International Development (2012).

resident coordinator survey respondents (67 per cent) stated that greater visibility of the norms and standards was the main added value that UN-Women brought to their countries of operation, owing to its exclusive focus on gender equality and significant advocacy efforts. At the country level, UN-Women has contributed to more United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks with increased numbers of joint programmes on gender equality, greater capacity-building of United Nations staff around the subject and greater use of gender scorecards.

25. UN-Women effectively raised the visibility of gender equality norms and standards among the general public, particularly regarding the normative framework for ending violence against women. In the context of the Secretary-General's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, UN-Women led efforts to make this a public issue. Other examples of the Entity's initiatives in raising public awareness are shown in the box below.

Examples of UN-Women public awareness campaigns around gender equality norms and standards

The "**Ready for the list**" campaign in 2014 aimed to raise public awareness of the importance of having more women in decision-making in Uruguay, in accordance with the quota electoral law of 2009. It featured well-known Uruguayan artists, businesswomen and journalists and aired on television channels across the country and used social networks.

As the secretariat to the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, UN-Women organized events around the world as part of the yearly **16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**. In 2013, the theme was "Safe spaces for women and girls", and UN-Women promoted the recommendations of the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

26. UN-Women has effectively used social media and public figures to raise awareness of its mandate among the general public. Through Twitter, UN-Women not only promoted its work and highlighted its good practices but also forwarded information published by newspapers and others to enhance awareness of the new and remaining challenges to the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women worldwide. The UN-Women social media audience grew to more than 1.9 million followers in 2014. At the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2014, UN-Women reached an audience of 47 million Twitter users, compared with 28 million in 2013.

27. UN-Women has effectively deployed its advocacy role to promote increased dialogue around its mandate. For example, in the lead-up to the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, UN-Women organized approximately 100 global, regional and national events addressing the 12 critical areas of concern of the Platform and forged a media compact with 30 media organizations worldwide. Starting in 2011, UN-Women organized, in

partnership with other United Nations entities, 25 to 30 open days each year on women and peace and security to commemorate the adoption of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), as well as to promote dialogue among civil society representatives, activists and United Nations staff.

B. UN-Women has achieved positive results in strengthening the normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women

UN-Women has successfully supported the adoption of global and regional norms and standards

28. Within an often challenging political and cultural environment, UN-Women has strengthened the normative framework by supporting the adoption of gender-specific norms and standards and promoting the integration of its mandate into global and sectoral agendas. Particularly, nearly half of UN-Women headquarters staff (48 per cent), one third of United Nations partners at headquarters (35 per cent) and one fourth of UN-Women field staff (25 per cent) interviewed indicated the inclusion of a stand-alone goal on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the proposal of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals, together with the integration of gender-sensitive targets for the other goals, as the most significant normative support result to which UN-Women had contributed at the global level. The Entity's 2013 position paper entitled "A transformative stand-alone goal on achieving gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment: imperatives and key components" constituted a solid basis for member States and stakeholder consultations and was used to facilitate dialogue at 42 meetings at the national and regional levels. UN-Women substantially contributed to proceedings of the Open Working Group: it provided advice to the technical support team and other working groups and co-led with the United Nations Children's Fund the global thematic consultation on addressing inequalities.

29. The Entity's engagement in the process leading to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Goals led to the mainstreaming of its mandate into the outcome document of the Conference (General Assembly resolution 66/288, annex). In parallel, UN-Women effectively supported the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change towards the approval of the decision on gender balance and improving the participation of women in Framework Convention negotiations and in the representation of parties in bodies established pursuant to the Convention or the Kyoto Protocol (decision 23/CP.18) and the Lima work programme on gender (decision 18/CP.20). UN-Women also supported the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, held in 2014; references to its mandate were included throughout the outcome document of the Conference (General Assembly resolution 69/15, annex).

30. The Entity's work with the Commission on the Status of Women has been particularly effective. Most UN-Women staff interviewed at headquarters (64 per cent) mentioned the achievement of agreed conclusions at the end of fifty-seventh and fifty-eighth sessions of the Commission as one of the key results regarding the adoption of gender-specific norms and standards to which had UN-Women contributed during the past three years. Those conclusions advanced the normative framework on ending violence against women (with an emphasis on prevention

services) and actions needed to accelerate the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.

31. The Entity's normative support work has also contributed to important results at the global level in the area of women and peace and security. They included the adoption of Security Council resolution 2122 (2013), which put in place stronger measures to enable women to participate in conflict resolution and recovery; and the adoption by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. Nearly one third of United Nations partners interviewed at headquarters (29 per cent) noted that UN-Women had strengthened its engagement with the Council, supporting the participation of civil society representatives and ensuring consistent language in Council outcomes.

32. UN-Women has contributed to greater gender mainstreaming in General Assembly outcomes. The share of Assembly resolutions that included a gender perspective increased from 32 per cent in 2011 to 42 per cent in 2013.[14] While the Third Committee maintained the highest share of resolutions that integrated gender equality and the empowerment of women (68 per cent), the share of Second and Fifth Committee decisions with a gender perspective doubled from 2011 to 2013.[15]

33. The Entity's revised approach towards the preparation of strategic intergovernmental meetings has contributed to the achievement of normative outcomes. According to UN-Women staff, key elements of that approach included:

(a) Strengthened evidence and knowledge base for discussion, including inputs from United Nations and civil society partners;

(b) Early engagement with member States through formal and informal meetings at the global, regional and country levels to achieve political consensus;

(c) Internal coordination of inputs from all UN-Women divisions and field offices through the establishment of dedicated task forces (such as a working group on the post-2015 agenda);

(d) Coherent United Nations position on the themes being discussed;

(e) Sustained advocacy efforts.

34. UN-Women, including its regional offices, has also contributed to enhancing the normative framework at the regional level. It has effectively supported regional intergovernmental bodies, such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Council of Europe, in the process leading up to the approval of conventions and declarations, particularly in the area of ending violence against women.[16]

---

[14] A/69/182.

[15] Integration of a gender perspective in the work of the General Assembly, UN-Women infographic, 2014.

[16] Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence Against Children in ASEAN (2013); Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (2013).

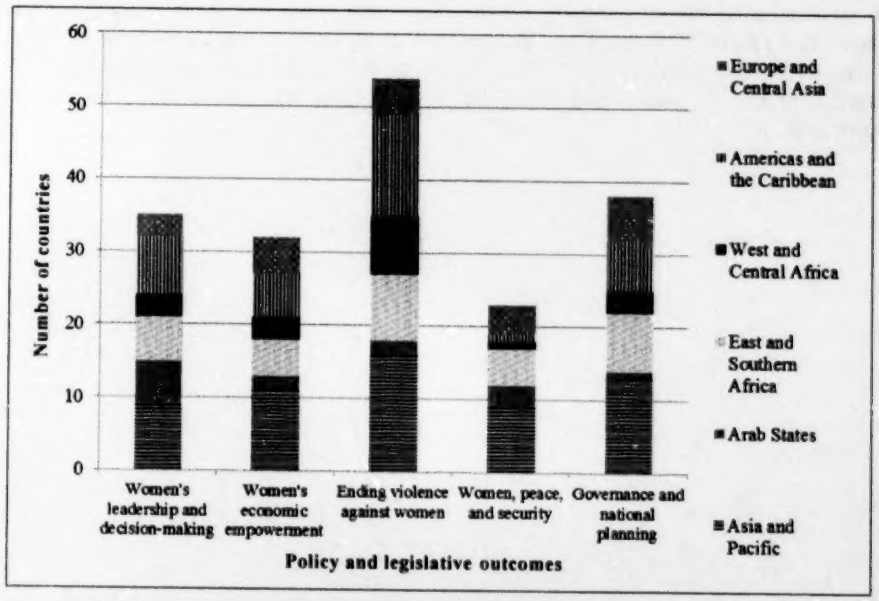
UN-Women has contributed to stronger national legislation and policies

35. At the national level, the Entity's normative advisory support to Governments included ensuring that international commitments (such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or agreed conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women) were reflected in national development agendas; promoting legal frameworks aligned with those commitments; and supporting Governments and civil society organizations in monitoring implementation (e.g. through reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the universal periodic review). In several countries, including the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico and Uzbekistan, UN-Women engaged with civil society organizations and provided technical support to national women's ministries to integrate the Committee's concluding observations into national gender-specific programmes. The civil society advisory group mechanism provided a forum for enhancing the Entity's advocacy of gender-specific norms.

36. In its annual reports, UN-Women notes the achievement of normative results at the country and regional levels in all six impact areas of its strategic plan, shown in figure II. It is noted in the same reports, however, that UN-Women was somewhat more successful in promoting national legislation and policies on ending violence against women, gender-responsive budgeting and women's leadership in politics and decision-making than in promoting women's economic empowerment and women and peace and security (in contrast to its success in the latter at the global level).

Figure II

Countries where UN-Women contributed to policy and legislative outcomes, by impact area



Source: OIOS analysis of UN-Women annual reports, E/CN.6/2012/2, E/CN.6/2013/2, E/CN.6/2014/2, UNW/2012/4, UNW/2013/3, UNW/2014/2.

37. Specific examples of those results included:

- Strengthened policy and legal frameworks on ending violence against women in 54 countries
- Gender-responsive national planning and budget documents in 38 countries
- Quota systems and reforms to promote the participation of women in electoral and political processes in 35 countries
- Support to national Governments in enhancing labour, land, property and inheritance rights through legal and policy reforms, and incorporation of women's economic empowerment in national plans in 32 countries
- Development of 15 national action plans on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), and support to constitutional and electoral reforms in eight post-conflict countries

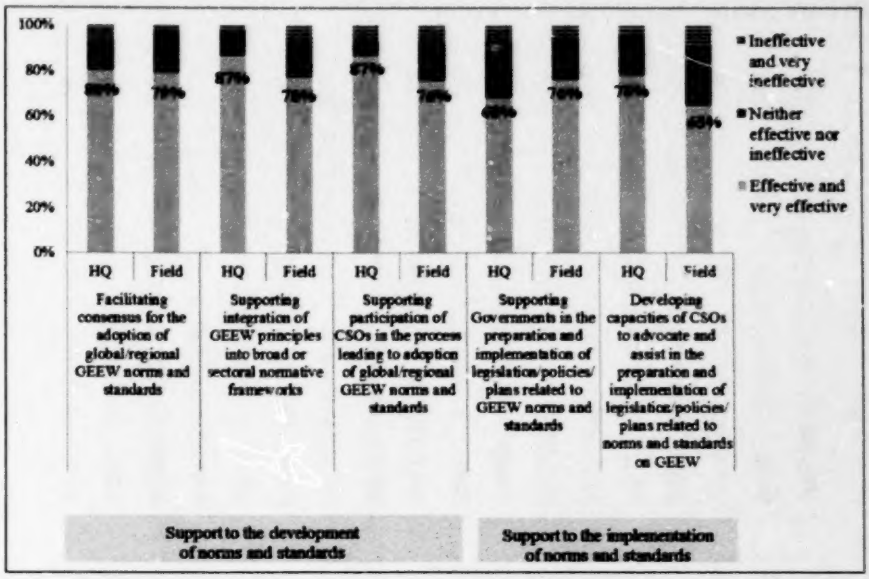
C. UN-Women support to the implementation of gender equality norms and standards at the global, regional and national levels has been challenged by several factors

UN-Women has been generally effective in supporting the development and the implementation of norms and standards, but has greater success in the former than the latter

38. The United Nations Evaluation Group's definition of normative support work includes both direct support to the development of norms and standards and support to implementing those standards at the policy and programme levels. Figure III shows that most UN-Women headquarters and field staff surveyed rated the Entity's normative support activities effective; however, they rated activities supporting the implementation of norms and standards less effective than those supporting their development.

Figure III

Effectiveness of UN-Women normative support work by activity, rated by UN-Women headquarters and field staff


100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
Ineffective and very ineffective
Neither effective nor ineffective
Effective and very effective
HQ
Field
Facilitating consensus for the adoption of global/regional GEEW norms and standards
Supporting integration of GEEW principles into broad or sectoral normative frameworks
Supporting participation of CSOs in the process leading to adoption of global/regional GEEW norms and standards
Supporting Governments in the preparation and implementation of legislation/policies/ plans related to GEEW norms and standards
Developing capacities of CSOs to advocate and assist in the preparation and implementation of legislation/policies/ plans related to norms and standards on GEEW
Support to the development of norms and standards
Support to the implementation of norms and standards

Source: OIOS survey.

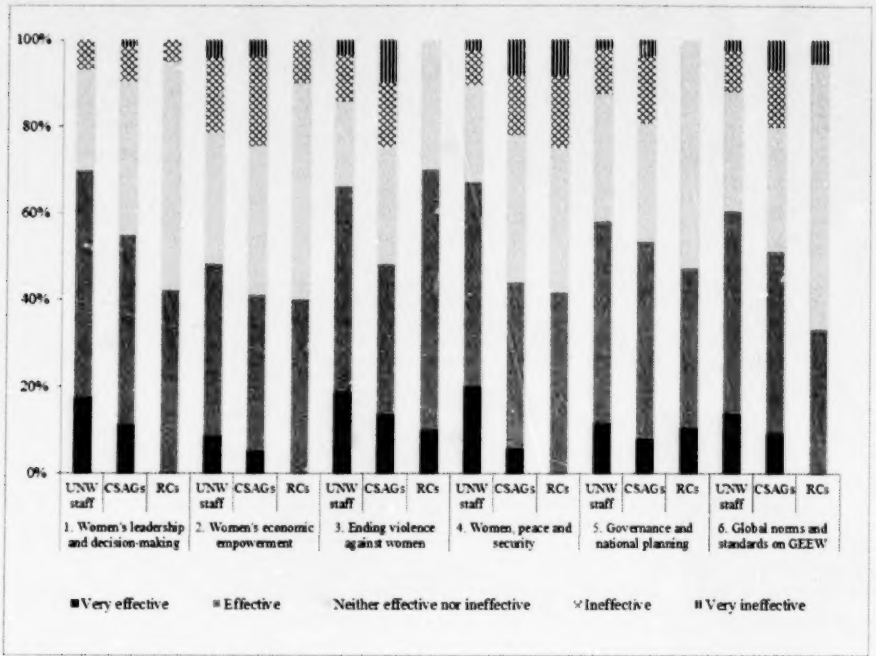
Abbreviations: CSOs, civil society organizations; GEEW, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

39. While acknowledging that supporting the implementation of norms and standards was more challenging than supporting their development, most UN-Women staff (97 per cent at headquarters and 90 per cent in the field), a majority of representatives of civil society organizations (61 per cent) and half of United Nations and government representatives interviewed stated that UN-Women had been generally more effective in supporting development than implementation. The indicators reported as "almost on track" and "off track" in the Executive Director's most recent report to the Executive Board on progress made on the UN-Women strategic plan, 2011-2013 (UNW/2014/2), referred mostly to implementation activities.

40. As shown in figure IV, UN-Women staff, civil society advisory group and resident coordinator survey respondents gave mixed ratings to the Entity's normative support work in achieving results in its six impact areas over the past three years. UN-Women staff gave positive ratings to all of their work, with the exception of women's economic empowerment. Civil society advisory group survey respondents rated UN-Women positively in three areas and negatively in the other three. Resident coordinators gave positive ratings only to the Entity's normative support work in the area of ending violence against women, which also had the highest number of outputs in its 2014 progress report (UNW/2014/2).

Figure IV

Effectiveness of UN-Women normative support work in achieving results in impact areas, rated by UN-Women staff, members of UN-Women civil society advisory groups and resident coordinators



Source: OIOS surveys.

Abbreviations: CSAGs, civil society advisory groups; GEEW, gender equality and the empowerment of women; RCs, resident coordinators.

Insufficient resources and other factors beyond the Entity's direct control have made supporting the implementation of norms and standards challenging

41. Insufficient resources have particularly hindered the Entity's capacity in the field, which is critical for the successful implementation of global norms and standards. The majority of UN-Women Professional staff (63 per cent, including national staff) are now based in one of its 84 field offices.[17] However, the average size of a UN-Women field office (excluding regional offices) is 2.8 staff, and UN-Women is represented by only one person in 27 countries. The Entity's capacity in the field is particularly limited in West and Central Africa, which account for only 8 per cent of UN-Women field staff, and the Arab States, which account for 11 per cent.

42. Most UN-Women staff surveyed (83 per cent) stated that inadequate human resources in the field negatively influenced the Entity's capacity to support Governments in norm formulation and implementation and to develop the capacity of civil society organizations to advocate gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women field capacity has also been inadequate to fulfil demands from

[17] OIOS elaboration of UN-Women data.

Governments and meet stakeholder expectations. For example, a high-level stakeholder interviewed in India stated that project proposals often came unfunded, and the limited size of the UN-Women office in Senegal hampered the organization's capacity to follow up on commitments with a national ministry. Nearly half of United Nations partners interviewed in the field (46 per cent), including resident coordinators, stated that the Entity's high staff turnover and insufficient capacity to follow up on coordination meetings and sustain operations was the most notable challenge that they faced in their country of operations. The majority of resident coordinators surveyed in countries where UN-Women has no physical presence (63 per cent) reported the absence of a fully fledged office as the biggest challenge that they faced in their working relationship with UN-Women.

43. Several other factors beyond its direct control made it difficult for UN-Women to fully support the implementation of norms and standards. They included the lack of political will of national Governments and/or individual ministries, limited government capacities to implement norms and standards, and cultural resistance to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

UN-Women has faced challenges regarding the broadness of its impact areas, as well as insufficient linkages between its headquarters and field offices and its activities in support of norm development and implementation

44. Additional factors have made it challenging for UN-Women to support the implementation of normative gains that it helped to achieve. First, the six impact areas of the UN-Women strategic plan covered a very wide range of development results to which UN-Women planned to contribute, thus making it difficult to develop specific strategies and tools for operationalizing the outcomes established in the plan. This challenge was also stated in the review by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network, which expressed concern that UN-Women did not provide explicit theories of change for its impact areas that explained how outputs were intended to contribute to the outcomes identified in the development results framework.[18] The UN-Women humanitarian strategy for 2014-2017 is a good example of a clear document in which linkages between normative, operational and coordination activities are explicitly discussed.

45. Second, insufficient linkages between UN-Women headquarters and field offices have hampered the implementation of normative gains. Those weak linkages were one of the three main obstacles volunteered by staff surveyed when asked about challenges in implementing their normative support mandate, and fewer than half of UN-Women staff survey respondents (48 per cent) rated UN-Women effective at coordinating headquarters and field offices in supporting the adoption and implementation of norms and standards. Furthermore, until 2014, UN-Women regional offices had not been represented in the UN-Women senior management team, which was composed entirely of headquarters staff. UN-Women headquarters thus did not obtain the full benefits of the regional perspective in its deliberations and decisions, and the regional offices were not completely aware of considerations that led to headquarters decisions. The extended senior management team, which now includes the regional directors, is, however, scheduled to meet only 2-3 times a year. This seems insufficient to foster more regular and systematic working

[18] Draft synthesis report of the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network on UN-Women, October 2014. UN-Women agreed in part with this assessment.

relationships between regional directors and senior management colleagues at headquarters.

46. Insufficient headquarters/field linkages were also exemplified by the need for more specific and regular guidance to field offices. While the headquarters communicates with the field regarding significant normative decisions of intergovernmental meetings, such as the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and has developed some guidance notes on particular norms and standards, specific and practical advice on how to translate those decisions in the field was not regularly provided. Many UN-Women field staff surveyed (43 per cent) and interviewed (20 per cent) volunteered that they received insufficient support from headquarters with regard to substantive guidance for supporting the implementation of norms and standards.

47. Third, the implementation of norms and standards was hindered by inadequate integration between the Entity's normative development and implementation activities. The UN-Women Programme and Operations Manual broadly refers to the need to develop country programmes within the normative framework and acknowledges the need to align those programmes with national priorities: country strategic notes refer to internationally agreed norms and standards (for example, 10 of 13 notes reviewed discussed how to implement conclusions of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women). However, there is no analysis or guidance linking the different norms by strategic issues; nor are there wider organizational policies on how to interpret and implement those norms. Of the 25 UN-Women headquarters staff interviewed, 4 volunteered that UN-Women should better articulate how operational results had been achieved owing to its normative support work, and it was one of the main recommendations made to strengthen UN-Women. The evaluation by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network identified the linking of the Entity's policy dialogue and normative support roles at the global level with lessons learned and operations at the regional and country levels as a major challenge, and noted that systems for the dissemination of internal knowledge and communication of lessons learned between headquarters and country offices required improvement. It reported the difficulty in seeing a clear link between UN-Women activities and outputs and the ensuing difficulty in assessing the Entity's contributions to development results.

48. The Entity's structure also limited the optimal integration of its normative development and implementation activities. While coordination between the subprogrammes worked very well for key events, such as the sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women, it had not yet been fully translated into more regular day-to-day interaction. Twenty-eight per cent of UN-Women headquarters staff interviewed indicated that there was limited dialogue between and within the two subprogrammes and poor coordination between the divisions at headquarters. Following the first UN-Women staff survey in 2014, the Executive Director established a working group on internal communications to optimize communication between headquarters divisions and at the regional and country levels.

D. UN-Women has not yet fully leveraged its United Nations partnerships in order to more effectively support the implementation of the normative framework

UN-Women has effectively led and guided coordination mechanisms at the headquarters level

49. In order to effectively support the development and implementation of the normative framework, UN-Women must effectively coordinate with its United Nations partners. It has had some success in this regard, even though the coordination mandate was added only when UN-Women was created. A majority of UN-Women staff surveyed (55 per cent) rated coordination between UN-Women and other United Nations entities as very effective or effective, and two thirds rated UN-Women very effective or effective in promoting the integration of gender issues into the work programmes of other United Nations entities. In addition to the normative gains discussed in result B, UN-Women has, for example, spearheaded the United Nations system-wide action plan for the implementation of United Nations policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which has enhanced the United Nations system's ability to hold itself accountable. The Entity's technical support included the coordination of 13 inter-agency workshops with the participation of between 12 and 31 entities from 2012 to 2014. The introduction of this accountability system was repeatedly cited in interviews as having significantly contributed to progress on gender equality and the empowerment of women in the United Nations system.

50. At the global level, UN-Women has participated in several coordination mechanisms. It chaired and provided substantive servicing to the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and the task team on gender equality of the United Nations Development Group. Since the fifty-seventh session of the Commission on the Status of Women, UN-Women has used the Network to exchange experiences and prepare a joint United Nations position statement for the priority theme of the Commission, and the average rating of Network participants at the 2013 meeting regarding the extent to which the specific objectives of the annual session were addressed was 4.5 out of 6. UN-Women has used its United Nations partnerships to support and monitor the implementation of key intergovernmental resolutions, such as the section on gender in the resolution on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

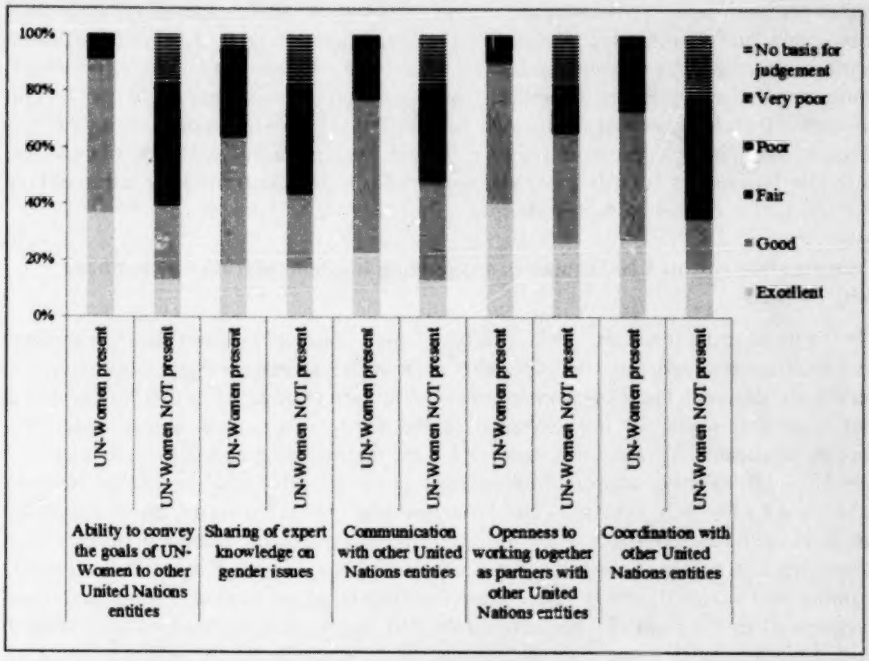
51. On the other hand, UN-Women has not always used coordination mechanisms to their fullest potential for promoting the implementation of the normative framework. The Network meets in plenary before the session of the Commission on the Status of Women and holds one or two interim meetings throughout the year, not taking advantage of opportunities for more regular and systematic institutional follow-up to the Commission's commitments and recommendations. The Entity's United Nations partners noted that the extent to which commitments and recommendations were followed up depended on the grade of Network representatives: gender focal points were often at an insufficiently high level of authority or too junior to make decisions and commitments. Eight of nine Network members interviewed volunteered that the Network could be used more effectively for policy discussions and strategy development to support the implementation of the Commission's agreed conclusions.

UN-Women has been more effective in working within United Nations country teams where it has a country presence

52. At the country level, UN-Women has contributed to increasing synergies and coherence within the United Nations country team that support implementation of the normative framework, including through its regional offices in countries where it has no field presence. It chaired or co-chaired 91 United Nations gender theme groups supporting the work of resident coordinators and country teams. Nearly two thirds (62 per cent) of United Nations partners interviewed in the field indicated that UN-Women played an important advocacy and coordination role within the United Nations country team, with particular focus on ending violence against women (all UN-Women country workplans reviewed presented a multisectoral approach) and reporting against normative frameworks, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. For example, the UN-Women office in India played an important leadership role in the United Nations support to the Government after the highly publicized gang rape in Delhi in 2012. Joint programming with UN-Women was referenced in 40 per cent of the resident coordinator reports reviewed, and 8 of 11 United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks reviewed included gender-specific outcomes.

53. The Entity's United Nations partnerships around its normative support work have been stronger in those countries where it has a presence, as shown in figure V. Resident coordinators in countries with a UN-Women presence consistently rated it more positively on its participation in the United Nations country team than resident coordinators in countries where it was not present. UN-Women has also been more effective in mainstreaming gender into the work of the country team when it has a country presence: a majority of resident coordinator survey respondents (73 per cent) for the former rated UN-Women very effective or effective in this regard, compared with less than half (43 per cent) for the latter.

Figure V
Resident coordinator ratings of UN-Women participation in United Nations country teams



Source: OIOS surveys.

UN-Women has not fully leveraged its United Nations partnerships to support the implementation of norms and standards, although some tools and mechanisms have been effective

54. UN-Women has not adequately capitalized on its United Nations partnerships to fully leverage the comparative advantages of other entities with a greater field presence in order to better support the implementation of normative gains. For example, at the country level, UN-Women has traditionally worked primarily with the Ministry of Women. While it has worked with other sectoral ministries in some countries, it has not always fully utilized the wider networks and broader agendas of other United Nations agencies in order to further reach out to those ministries. In addition, 13 of 26 United Nations partners interviewed in the field suggested that UN-Women should provide advice to other United Nations partners on integrating gender equality and the empowerment of women into their work, rather than being involved in direct project implementation.

55. During its own field missions, OIOS observed examples of UN-Women effectively leveraging its United Nations partnerships, as well as opportunities for doing it more. These included, as a positive example, working with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS on the adoption of a national law on HIV and, as an example of an unexploited opportunity, not partnering with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization for greater access to the Ministry of Education to advance gender-specific norms around education.

56. Strategic partnership agreements recognizing the respective mandates of UN-Women and its United Nations partners have facilitated the Entity's better leveraging of those partnerships to support the implementation of norms and standards and have provided an overall framework for cooperation, enhanced interaction and information sharing.[19] However, according to five of six United Nations partners interviewed and with whom UN-Women had such agreements, those agreements need to be updated and better integrated into field work. The absence of such agreements can lead to inefficiency; for example, on one OIOS mission the country representative of a United Nations entity stated that confusion with UN-Women on definitions of and approaches to human trafficking led to delays in important anti-trafficking legislation.

Coordination role of UN-Women in supporting implementation has not been fully defined

57. Within this context, the Entity's roles and responsibilities regarding coordination in supporting the implementation of the normative framework have not been fully defined. The UN-Women meta-evaluation conducted in 2012 determined that there was room for improvement in the Entity's coordination and noted the absence of identifying and understanding United Nations partner complementarities.[20] The 2014 UN-Women coordination strategy is intended to enhance United Nations coherence by creating synergies and strengthening collective action on its mandate, but it is acknowledged that there is opportunity for greater complementarity and coherence and evidence suggests that obstacles and challenges remain at the global, regional and national levels. More than one fourth of government representatives interviewed in the field (27 per cent) indicated that United Nations entities should work together more closely on achieving gender-specific goals, and one third of United Nations partners interviewed in the field suggested that UN-Women should more clearly articulate its core business. Many United Nations partners interviewed at headquarters (40 per cent) stated that UN-Women needed to clarify its coordination role; one fourth of UN-Women headquarters staff interviewed volunteered the same. Furthermore, close to one fifth of resident coordinators surveyed (17 per cent) volunteered "insufficient coordination" and "overlapping and unclear mandates" with other United Nations entities as one of the biggest challenges that UN-Women faced in mainstreaming norms and standards into the work of their country teams. The assessment by the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network noted UN-Women staff as being uncertain about how to operationalize coordination of the mandate. In this context, discussions with United Nations partners, such as the one organized by the UN-Women regional office for Asia and the Pacific in 2014 on the implications of its coordination role within the United Nations system, helped to define roles in those impact areas of the Entity's strategic framework for which it had a responsibility to trigger a United Nations response but did not have the technical capacity to implement projects.

58. Other factors may account for limitations in the Entity's capacity to fully leverage its coordination role to support the implementation of the normative framework. Forty-two per cent of United Nations partners interviewed at

[19] For example, with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Labour Organization.

[20] UN-Women meta-evaluation (2012). The assessment occurred while UN-Women was still quite new.

headquarters volunteered that UN-Women had limited resources, particularly within the context of its large mandate. In addition, UN-Women cannot be held accountable for the priority given to gender equality and the empowerment of women by other United Nations entities or for their willingness to cooperate with UN-Women in this regard, and the normative framework does not always clearly define or imply the Entity's role in supporting its implementation.

V. Conclusion

59. Four years after its creation, UN-Women stands at a critical juncture for making an even greater impact in the lives of women. Since 2011, it has made significant strides in advancing the global normative agenda for women's rights. For this, it is to be commended. Throughout the conduct of the evaluation, UN-Women was consistently acknowledged as effectively advocating and championing the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Its unique added value is its singular focus on that subject and the authority that it brings to the discourse on women's human rights.

60. UN-Women needs to capitalize on the impressive gains that it has achieved in its normative support work and transform them into even greater results on the ground. It is important to acknowledge the very real challenges that UN-Women faces in moving forward, including cultural resistance, limited resources, competing demands and still-evolving organizational roles. If UN-Women is to make a difference, it needs to more strategically focus on a few critical issues that can have a significant impact and systematically implement activities to address those. UN-Women also needs to gain greater synergies from its normative and operational work. It needs to improve how it communicates about the important work that it does and about how gender equality is vital to the achievement of the larger goals of the United Nations.

61. At the sixty-ninth session of the General Assembly, Member States recognized the confluence of key intergovernmental processes in 2015, including the target date for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, the elaboration of the post-2015 development agenda, the 20-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the 15-year review of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and climate change work, as a critical opportunity for enhancing efforts to accelerate the achievement of the goals of gender equality and empowerment of women. The year 2015 thus marks a great opportunity for UN-Women to make an even greater impact.

62. At the fifty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in 2014, it was recognized that not a single country had achieved full equality for women. With a stand-alone gender equality goal and with gender perspectives mainstreamed throughout its framework, the post-2015 development agenda provides a strong context for furthering the work and results around gender equality. As stated by the Executive Director in her address to the Third Committee in October 2014, UN-Women must now focus on closing the gap between commitments and action and between words and deeds.

VI. Recommendations

63. OIOS makes the following four important recommendations to UN-Women:

Recommendation 1 (result C)

64. **In the context of the midterm review of its strategic plan in 2016, UN-Women should define how it will address key issues within its six impact areas.** Specifically, UN-Women should develop theories of change which represent a visual road map conveying what UN-Women aims to achieve and how it intends to achieve it at the global, regional and country levels.

Indicator of achievement: description of how key issues will be addressed, with accompanying theories of change

Recommendation 2 (result C)

65. **UN-Women should further enhance the synergies between its two subprogrammes by making linkages between them more systematic, regular and, where appropriate, formal.** This should build upon good practices and lessons learned from existing mechanisms in order to further strengthen communication and coordination between subprogrammes 1 and 2 in all phases of normative support work.

Indicator of achievement: more systematic and regular linkages between the two subprogrammes

Recommendation 3 (result C)

66. **UN-Women should further strengthen the existing linkages between its headquarters and field offices, including enhanced support to field offices in the implementation of the framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women,** including by:

(a) Ensuring the participation of regional directors in senior management team meetings where the topic(s) discussed would benefit from their direct input, and regularly sharing minutes or summaries of all such meetings with regional directors;

(b) Enhancing the terms of reference of thematic advisers in the regional offices to provide more guidance to country offices on strategies and tools for implementing the normative framework, including how to use theories of change at the country level for the implementation of that framework;

(c) Organizing regular regional meetings of UN-Women country representatives to share experiences in the implementation of norms and standards and draw lessons learned with a view to better informing normative support work at all levels.

Indicators of achievement:

- Inclusion of regional directors in relevant senior management team meetings and sharing of minutes or summaries
- Enhanced terms of reference of thematic advisers

- Regular UN-Women country representative meetings organized at the regional level

Recommendation 4 (result D)

67. **UN-Women should, in consultation with its United Nations partners, further clarify complementarities with regard to implementing the normative framework.** Building upon existing tools, UN-Women should identify specific ways in which it can best utilize the comparative advantage of its partners to strengthen implementation of the normative framework.

Indicator of achievement: clearer complementarities between UN-Women and its United Nations partners

(*Signed*) Carman L. **Lapointe**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Annex

Formal response of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to the evaluation by the Office of Internal Oversight Services[a]

18 March 2015

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) would like to express its appreciation to the Inspection and Evaluation Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) for conducting this important exercise, which should help UN-Women to further consolidate the linkages between its normative and operational work.

UN-Women will make use of the findings and recommendations of this evaluation, including in the context of the midterm review of its current strategic plan, which will take place in 2016.

Following the submission of the final report, UN-Women reached out to OIOS on a number of aspects of the report, including through a set of comments to help to make the evaluation fully accurate and adequately reflect the balance between achievements and pending challenges faced by the Entity.

UN-Women is grateful to OIOS for that constructive dialogue.

From the outset, UN-Women would like to highlight that strengthening the linkages between normative and operational work is constrained by the persistent significant underfunding of the Entity.

UN-Women appreciates the acumen of the evaluation in pointing to resources as a key issue in relation to ensuring strong normative and operational linkages. Some of the recommendations contained in the report are not resource neutral, and the Entity's ability to fully comply with them depends, at least in part, on the future increase of available resources. Especially at the field level, integrating normative standards is often more resource-intensive, as it may require investments in building or strengthening national capacity, and working with a number of national partners and institutions.

UN-Women also appreciated the readiness of the evaluators to provide explanations on methodological issues and related limitations.

Consolidating and further enhancing linkages between the headquarters and the field is a priority for UN-Women.

UN-Women agrees with the evaluation on the key role of organizational structures and arrangements in ensuring effective linkages between normative standards and operations. In this regard, the regional architecture and the framework for delegation of authority could have benefited from deeper attention and analysis in the report.

[a] In the present annex, OIOS presents the full text of the comments received from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). This practice has been instituted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 64/263, following the recommendation of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

The 2014 reporting process for field offices has raised the bar considerably in terms of how the organization systematically tracks the links between normative and operational work, in particular how support to the implementation of norms and standards is provided at the field level. This includes the finalization and roll-out of a new results management system for the organization. The new system provides high-quality information which helps in appreciating how field-level structures (regional, multi-country and country offices) work to translate normative frameworks at the country level in line with institutional guidance.

In the report, it is recognized that UN-Women has contributed to the increased visibility and awareness of gender issues in the global policy arena. This success is due to its investment in substantive and technical expertise, knowledge bases, sustained advocacy efforts, extensive alliance and partnership building and proactive outreach efforts among all stakeholders, which, in turn, led to more systematic global attention to gender equality and the empowerment of women.

UN-Women has focused its efforts on promoting multi-stakeholder consensus building, advocacy and constituency building, as well as mobilizing new partnerships with key stakeholders, particularly member States and civil society.

There are several examples that demonstrate a synergistic approach. The fifty-seventh to fifty-ninth sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women were based on the Entity's substantive preparations, technical support and proactive engagement in advocacy and alliance building, globally and at the regional and country levels. This would not have been possible without effective internal communication, coordination and collaboration. Without undermining further scope for improvement, UN-Women is of the view that collaboration and coordination between headquarters and the field is, overall, effective and robust.

Under the leadership of its Programme Division, for example, the peer review group for strategic notes and annual workplans formulation brings together all divisions to provide quality assurance and support to planning processes in regional, multi-country and country offices, including on how to ensure appropriate normative-operational linkages.

The report mentions the Entity's role in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review as an example of global-level engagement. While the review is indeed negotiated globally, it focuses on the United Nations system's country-level operations for development. UN-Women supported member State negotiations and is actively involved in monitoring its implementation jointly with other United Nations entities. According to the latest report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review, gender was rated at the top of the list among the areas where United Nations support was considered most significant by programme countries. This aspect is of direct relevance to the Entity's inter-agency and system-wide role and to this evaluation.

UN-Women also supports the Economic and Social Council in the area of gender mainstreaming in the United Nations system, including through the annual report of the Secretary-General on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes within the United Nations system.

UN-Women chairs or co-chairs more than 90 gender theme Groups, stretching its United Nations coordination functions across its country-level presence,

including through the work of its six regional offices, which are all equipped with a full-time planning and coordination specialist.

UN-Women notes that the corporate strategy on the implementation of its system-wide and inter-agency coordination mandates is central to strengthening its overall direction and capacity to fully capitalize on partnerships with United Nations organizations.

Response of UN-Women to the recommendations of OIOS

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 1**.

The midterm review of the UN-Women strategic plan, 2014-2017, will reflect agreements on the new development agenda and the outcomes of the 20-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The midterm review will also present an overview of major results achieved, as well as those from across evaluations, including this one. An internal reference group will be established to ensure engagement and involvement across the organization (including the field offices) in the review process. The midterm review will also benefit from and be informed by the discussions and deliberations on the United Nations fitness-for-purpose and the Economic and Social Council dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system.

In addition, the midterm review will greatly benefit from the new results management system that UN-Women developed and rolled out for the preparation of its annual report on the implementation of the strategic plan. The new reporting process and system for field offices has considerably enhanced the capacity of the organization to systematically track the links between normative and operational work, in particular how norms and standards are pursued and implemented at the field level.

As part of the midterm review process, UN-Women will review and analyse performance information from the system and from other sources, such as evaluations, to rigorously interrogate the implicit theory of change that is reflected primarily in the development results framework of the strategic plan and to support the development of a more explicit theory and strategy in relation to the organization's main areas of focus.

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 2**.

Every organization makes decisions with regard to how to structure itself and its programmes internally to deliver on its mandate, and every organization subsequently strives to strike a balance between clear lines of accountability and maximizing collaborative and cross-divisional effectiveness. UN-Women is like other organizations in this regard and has worked consciously and consistently since its foundation to maximize the potential of its mandate and staff members and to build synergies across its programmes.

To that end, it is noted that several action have already been taken or are currently under way to address this recommendation. For example, a working group on the post-2015 development agenda and financing for development has been coordinating internal work and strategizing engagement with external partners (including member States, United Nations entities and civil society). The working

group specifically brings together all relevant divisions in both subprogrammes at headquarters, as well as all regional offices.

In addition, preparations for major initiatives, such as the annual session of the Commission on the Status of Women, are undertaken through a number of formal cross-divisional working groups, including a Steering Committee bringing together all divisions in both subprogrammes.

UN-Women has also taken steps to formalize the planning process for senior management team meetings, including maintaining proper records and sharing key outcomes with all staff, including through town hall meetings and communication to all staff.

It should also be noted that the two Assistant Secretaries-General heading each subprogramme continuously work with divisions in the other subprogramme, including through formal meetings with division directors and staff. The Entity will work to further enhance linkages between the Policy and the Intergovernmental Support Divisions, as well as between the United Nations System Coordination and the Programme Divisions, which are in separate subprogrammes.

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 3**.

As an organization with a growing field presence and a commitment to supporting countries to implement the gender equality framework, UN-Women works diligently to maintain strong links between its field offices and headquarters but recognizes that every opportunity for improving both vertical and horizontal linkages within the organization should be exploited. The implementation of the regional architecture (endorsed by the Executive Board in 2012 and rolled out in 2013) is critical in that regard and will continue to be regularly monitored to ensure effective empowerment of field structures and strong linkages between country offices, regional offices and headquarters.

In addition, the oversight and quality assurance system has been strengthened to ensure support to field offices in the implementation of the framework. This is most evident through the establishment of a peer review group comprising the directors of every headquarters division, which meets with regional office and country office staff to work on the formulation of programmes and plans, including on ensuring strong and strategic links between the normative and operational dimensions of the organization's work at every level. Within the context of the regional architecture and strengthened systematic dialogue between field offices and headquarters on plans and programmes, UN-Women agrees that the specific measures under recommendation 3 (a), (b) and (c) will be considered part of a broader effort to ensure stronger linkages between headquarters and field offices, including on normative developments, which UN-Women is pursuing.

In addition, the quality assurance system has been strengthened to ensure support to field offices in the implementation of the framework. The peer review group for the formulation of strategic notes and annual workplans, which brings together all divisions from both subprogrammes to support the planning of regional and country offices, including of the normative-operational linkage.

In 2014, UN-Women created an extended management team that brings together divisional directors, section chiefs, thematic heads and regional directors. UN-Women is in the process of enhancing the working methods of the extended

management team and refining its purpose, with the objective, inter alia, of strengthening linkages between headquarters and field offices.

UN-Women would also note that the Director of the Programme Division, which directly supervises the work of regional directors, sits on the senior management team and has the primary responsibility to ensure that relevant agenda items and outcomes of senior management team meetings are discussed and shared with regional directors as appropriate. Nevertheless, UN-Women agrees that the direct participation of regional directors to relevant senior management team meetings will be beneficial to further enhancing coherence and communication flows.

UN-Women agrees with **recommendation 4**.

The Entity notes that the revised recommendation is more consistent with the current discourse on a United Nations fit for purpose, which suggests a fundamental departure from interventions that are based mainly on rigid divisions of labour towards a much more integrated way of working with other United Nations partners, building on horizontal coherence, integration, synergies and collaborative approaches. UN-Women will work consistently with this forward-looking fundamental shift.

UN-Women recognizes that further strengthening its partnerships with other United Nations agencies is critical. Subject to the availability of resources, the Entity will increase its capacity to leverage the United Nations system and support the strengthening of its gender equality work based on the needs identified from the results of the implementation of the United Nations system-wide action plan for the implementation of United Nations policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women. UN-Women will also execute the updated strategy for implementing its system-wide and inter-agency mandates for gender equality and the empowerment of women, which will also be complemented by an underlying theory of change further articulating the various elements of its United Nations coordination mandate.

UN-Women is currently undergoing a corporate formative evaluation of the first four years of implementation of its system-wide and inter-agency mandates. That exercise will provide additional elements of lessons learned for the Entity's coordination role, including as regards complementarities with other United Nations partners.